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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001275

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, CA/OCS, S/CT, CA, DS,
DS/IP/EAP, DS/ITA/EAP, DOJ FOR CRIM AAG SWARTZ, DOJ/CTS FOR
MULLANEY,
FBI FOR ETTUI/SSA ROTH, NCTC WASHDC, NSC FOR J. BADER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/30/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: JULY 17 BOMBINGS -- CLAIM OF RESPONSIBILITY SEEN
AS A MATTER OF REBRANDING

REF: JAKARTA 1268 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Ted Osius, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Mission reached out to security authorities and other knowledgeable contacts about the recent blog post claiming responsibility for the July 17 Jakarta bombings. Although the "Al-Qaeda Indonesia" name used in the blog is new, virtually all observers agree that it appears to be more a rebranding of Noordin Top's Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) splinter group than the emergence of a new organization with new capabilities. GOI contacts have assured us that they are keeping their eye on the ball and working to improve interagency coordination. END SUMMARY

CLAIM OF RESPONSIBILITY

¶2. (SBU) In a July 26 blog posting that was widely reported in the Indonesian media July 29, a group calling itself Al-Qaeda Indonesia ("Al Qo'idah Indonesia") claimed responsibility for the July 17 Jakarta JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton bombings. The group claimed that the Marriott bombing was directed against the American Chamber of Commerce and the Ritz bombing was intended, among other things, to provide "a lesson" about the "crusader" Manchester United soccer team that was scheduled to arrive in Jakarta for an exhibition match the day after the bombing. (Note: Seven people were killed in the bombings and dozens injured--see reftels. The two hotels have since reopened for business. Manchester United canceled its trip due to the attacks.)

¶3. (C) The Indonesian-language blog posting at www.mediaislam-bushro.blogspot.com was signed by "The Leader of Al-Qaeda Indonesia, Abu Muawwidz Nur Din bin Muhammad Top Hafidzohullah." Mission contacts agreed that, while there is no confirmation the message actually came from longtime Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) operative Noordin Top, it matches his style. Since Top and his splinter organization (this is the first time the name Al-Qaeda Indonesia has been associated with Noordin's group) have been target number one of the Indonesian Police since the bombings, many Mission contacts consider the blogpost credible, but far from definitive. (Note: Top is a Malaysian national believed to be hiding in Indonesia.)

¶4. (C) The posting contains a number of misspellings (not typical of Top) and the spelling of Top's own name is different from that which he typically uses. Especially given that the blogpost was not made until more than a week

after the bombings, references to the AmCham and Man U may not indicate that they were actually targeted, but may simply be ex post facto rationalizing.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

15. (C) Observers see the new name for Top's group as a matter of rebranding. Rizal Sukma, a leading foreign affairs analyst at Jakarta's Center for Strategic and International Studies (who is considered one of Indonesia's most well-known Muslim thinkers), told poloff on July 30 that JI splinter elements were likely using the al-Qaeda label in an effort to attract more international attention for the attacks. He also speculated that Top and his associates may be hoping to attract more foreign support, especially from sources in Pakistan, by claiming the mantle of al-Qaeda. Sukma did not think the purported new organization heralded a major qualitative change in JI's operational capabilities. However, he cautioned that poor coordination among Indonesia's counterterrorism forces may have resulted in vulnerabilities that JI could exploit (see more below).

16. (C) In a July 30 meeting with poloff, longtime Indonesia observer John McBeth of the Singapore newspaper "The Straits Times" echoed Sukma's views and dismissed the claim of responsibility as nothing new. He noted that in the past Noordin Top had purportedly issued statements in the name of "al-Qaeda in the Malay Archipelago," and that while some aspects of these bombings were new, they were largely typical of previous JI operations. McBeth concluded that while JI may have slowly rebuilt its operational capabilities over the

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past months, the proclamation of al-Qaeda in Indonesia did not represent a fundamentally new threat. Likewise, International Crisis Group Senior Advisor Sidney Jones told poloff that the blog statements sound typical of Top and that it is plausible that the bombings were conducted by Top's longtime group, rather than some new entity led by Top.

GETTING COORDINATION ON TRACK

17. (C) Meanwhile, recent publicly aired allegations of infighting involving the Indonesian police and other agencies appear to have been taken to heart. Albert Matondang, Deputy to the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, told Pol/C and poloff on July 30 that Indonesian security officials were aware of the costs of breakdowns in coordination and would not let them interfere with the progress of the investigation which was going well. Likewise, Ansyad Mbai of the Counterterrorism Desk at the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs told us that Ministry officials are thoroughly engaged with the police in masterminding the investigation. Mbai added that the police are committed to pursuing a law enforcement approach that makes effective use of the full range of Indonesia's police apparatus.

18. (C) In a July 28 meeting, Pol/C underscored to Astari Daenuwy, an international relations assistant to the President, that the GOI needs to keep its eye on the ball and move forward with its investigation. Pol/C noted the reports of interagency tension. Daenuwy said the GOI understood these concerns. She added that interagency cooperation was improving.

HUME